

Message Text

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43

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TAGS: ENRG, BEXP, AU

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA'S SECOND NUCLEAR POWER PROJECT;

PRESS REPORTS ON FLAWS IN U.S. NUCLEAR

PLANTS MAY HARM U.S. CHANCES HERE

REF: A. VIENNA 7940; B. VIENNA 8145 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: INCOMPLETE AND MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS TO EFFECT THAT ONE-THIRD OF ALL NUCLEAR REACTORS IN U.S. HAVE BEEN SHUT DOWN BECAUSE OF DANGER OF RADIATION LEAKAGE HAVE SPREAD QUICKLY IN AUSTRIA AND COULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE U.S. CHANCES FOR WINNING AUSTRIA'S SECOND NUCLEAR POWER CONTRACT. END SUMMARY

1. AUSTRIA'S TABLOID MASS CIRCULATION PRESS WAS PRINTED MISLEADING SCARE STORIES. WHILE QUALITY PRESS HAS BEEN MORE RESPONSIBLE, SEMI-OFFICIAL WIENER ZEITUNG TODAY CARRIES A PAGE ONE ARTICLE REFERRING TO "DEBACLE" IN U.S. NUCLEAR SAFETY SYSTEMS.

2. IN EVENING TV NEWS BROADCAST SEPTEMBER 23, TRADE MINISTER STARIBACHER, WHOSE MINISTRY IS RESPONSIBLE

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FOR OVERALL ENERGY PLANNING IN AUSTRIA, LEFT DAMAGING

IMPRESSION THAT U.S. REACTORS ARE UNSAFE. STARIBACHER CLAIMED AMERICAN COMPANIES HAD LOST FIRST NUCLEAR POWER CONTRACT BECAUSE U.S. WOULD NOT MEET AUSTRIAN SAFETY STANDARDS. HE ALSO STATED THAT AUSTRIAN SAFETY STANDARDS ARE MORE RIGOROUS THAN IN U.S., AND HE CLAIMED THAT SITUATION SUCH AS THAT REPORTED IN U.S. COULD NOT HAPPEN IN AUSTRIA. UNFORTUNATELY, STARIBACHER CHOSE TO SPEAK BEFORE HE HAD RELIABLE AND AUTHORITATIVE INFORMATION ON PRECISELY WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN U.S.

3. EMBASSY HAS NOW RECEIVED TEXT OF AEC NEWS RELEASE OF SEPTEMBER 20 CONCERNING ITS INSTRUCTION TO OPERATORS OF BOILING WATER REACTORS TO CONDUCT EXAMINATIONS TO DETERMINE IF CORRECTIVE MEASURES ARE NECESSARY. WE ARE PROVIDING COPIES OF AEC NEWS RELEASE TO AUSTRIAN OFFICIALS AND MEDIA. WE INTEND ALSO TO CONTEXT VIGOROUSLY WITH GOA OFFICIALS TENOR OF STARIBACHER'S REMARKS. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE SHOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING BY CABLE SOONEST ANY ADDITIONAL POINTS WE CAN USE HERE TO DISPEL THESE WIDESPREAD AND EXAGGERATED REPORTS. WE SUSPECT OTHER POSTS IN SIMILAR SITUATION WOULD ALSO WELCOME ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE.

4. IN ADDITION, WE WOULD HOPE IN FUTURE TO BE ABLE TO HEAD OFF SUCH REPORTS BY RECEIVING AT OUTSET COMPLETE AND DETAILED INFORMATION ON ANY SIMILAR ACTIONS BY AEC. HUMES

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